



**MEMORANDUM
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER &
SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES**
County of Placer

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors DATE: January 25, 2022
FROM: Josh Huntsinger, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer
SUBJECT: Delegated Authority Request for Funding Applications for the French Meadows Project (FMP)

ACTION REQUESTED

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, or designee, to submit grant funding applications for remaining French Meadows Project (FMP) forest treatment work already reviewed and approved by this Board.

BACKGROUND

A number of state and federal agencies and certain private foundations are making funds available for forest health and wildfire risk reduction work in California's forests and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. For example, in December 2021 the County submitted two applications to a Proposition 68-funded Forest Conservation grant program administered by the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). There are additional project funding solicitations currently out from: the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for a Wildfire Recovery & Forest Resilience program; CalFIRE for fire prevention, forest health, and wood products workforce and business development projects; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for its Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities and Hazard Mitigation grant programs. Staff continues to research and track additional opportunities as they are announced.

With this request, staff is seeking to: 1) streamline the approval process by replacing numerous individual Board approval requests with delegated authority to the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer who oversees implementation of the FMP to approve/submit FMP funding proposals; and 2) make the County more nimble in terms of responding to FMP funding proposal solicitations by simplifying the application process, which is especially important due to what are often very short turnaround times from an agency's solicitation release to the required proposal submission deadline. As an example, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy released its Wildfire Recovery & Forest Resilience solicitation on January 3, 2022, and full applications are due by January 31, 2022. Such tight turnarounds can jeopardize the County's ability to successfully apply for funds if each individual application must come before the Board.

The French Meadows Project (FMP) was developed as a joint public-private management project to improve the health and resilience of the headwaters of French Meadows Reservoir, one of two primary reservoirs feeding the County's multi-purpose water supply and hydroelectric generation project located in the Middle Fork American River watershed and managed in partnership with the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA). The work of the FMP is conducted by the County, on behalf of the French Meadows Partnership, under the authority granted to the County as part of a 10-year Master Stewardship Agreement signed in 2018 between the County and the USDA Forest Service – Tahoe National Forest. The FMP's various management treatments are designed to improve forest health, reduce risk of large, damaging wildfires, and protect critical water and other infrastructure in the French Meadows project area.

In order to move forward with remaining FMP restoration activities as expeditiously as possible, staff recommends that your Board authorize the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, or designee, to submit grant funding applications for remaining French Meadows Project forest treatment work already reviewed and approved by this Board. This delegated authority would stand for the duration of the FMP, which is expected to complete its remaining forest health and resilience treatment work by December 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Two Notices of Exemption (NOE) were filed for the FMP Project: 1) The Project is consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class 8 CEQA Categorical Exemption: Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment) because it is an action authorized by the Placer County Grading Ordinance that will help assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment, and the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. This exemption was filed on December 21, 2018; and 2) The Project is consistent with Senate Bill (SB) 901. SB 901 provides that until January 1, 2023, CEQA would not apply to prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildlife that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This exemption was filed on January 24, 2019. The NEPA Decision Notice for the French Meadows Restoration Project was signed by the TNF Forest Supervisor on December 12, 2018.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action. Successful applications will increase the funding available to the French Meadows Partnership to support pre-identified forest management activities within the FMP area. Expenses incurred in the conduct of FMP work will be offset by this corresponding increase in revenue from grant award(s). The department will request Board approvals to execute all funding agreements resulting from a successful grant application.

ATTACHMENTS

Resolution

Before the Board of Supervisors County of Placer, State of California

In the matter of: A Resolution authorizing the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, or designee, to submit grant funding applications for remaining French Meadows Project forest treatment work already reviewed and approved by this Board.

Resolution No.: _____

The following Resolution was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held January 25, 2022, by the following vote:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest:

Clerk of said Board

WHEREAS, funds are being made available by multiple state and federal agencies and private foundations for forest health and wildfire risk reduction work; and

WHEREAS, the County of Placer as part of the French Meadows Partnership, intends to continue conducting remaining landscape-level restoration activities to protect and restore important forest and meadow habitats on National Forest system land in the upper watershed of the Middle Fork of the American River (the French Meadows Project); and

WHEREAS, in order to continue the restoration work on the French Meadows Project the County intends to apply to multiple agencies and foundations to secure necessary operational funds to support the remaining work; and

WHEREAS, the County wishes to delegate authorization to apply for this funding to the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, or designee.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer, State of California, that the Board hereby authorizes the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, or designee, to submit grant funding applications for remaining French Meadows Project forest treatment work already reviewed and approved by this Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution is effective from the date of adoption through December 31, 2024.